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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [GA](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: APPOINTMENT OF ATTORNEY GENERAL

REF: BANJUL 691 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

¶1. (SBU) The GOTG cabinet reshuffle that President Yahya Jammeh initiated in mid-October (reftels) is now complete, with the November 13 filling of the vacant position of Attorney General/Secretary of State (minister) for Justice. The GOTG announced the appointment of Kebba Sanyang, a young (age 36) magistrate and graduate of law schools in Sierra Leone and Ghana. Sanyang is unknown to us, but our contacts express hope that his rapid ascent in The Gambia's judiciary is an indicator of energy and competence.

¶2. (C) COMMENT: It remains to be seen whether Sanyang will have the inclination -- or the autonomy under an increasingly autocratic Jammeh -- to help reverse the current negative human rights trend here by, for example, promoting greater respect for the rule of law. As previously reported (reftels), Sanyang's predecessor, Sheikh Tijan Hydara, was widely viewed as among the cabinet's weakest performers and few regret his departure. The fact that it took Jammeh almost a month to find a successor to Hydara is testimony, according to our sources, to the reluctance of potential candidates in private legal practice to take on the portfolio -- in part due to the occupants' relatively brief tenure. Sanyang is reckoned to be the eleventh Attorney General/SOS Justice over the past twelve years. END COMMENT

STAFFORD